GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2500
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2001
CULTURAL TIES WITH SAARC COUNTRIES
SANJAY PASWAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

the details of achievements made so far with regard to strengthening cultural ties with SAARC countries particularly with Nepal during the past five years?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

A Statement is placed below on the table of the House

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN THE ANSWER TO LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2500 TO BE ANSWERE 14.03.2001 ON `CULTURAL TIES WITH SAARC COUNTRIES`

India has long standing cultural ties with countries in South Asia. The Government of India is committed to promote and strengthen these links.

A large number of students from SAARC countries are given an opportunity to study in India under different schemes.Around 300 bilateral scholarships are offered to students from these countries each year. Around 100 of these scholarships are for Nepal. In addition, India has unilaterally offered one hundred distance education scholarships for courses conducted by IGNOU exclusively for students from SAARC countries. A large number of these scholarships are availed of by students from Nepal.

The India-Nepal B.P. Koirala Foundation was set up in 1991, with approval of both Governments, to foster education and cultural exchanges between India and Nepal. Similarly the India-Sri Lanka foundation set up in 1998 fosters cultural exchanges between India and Sri Lanka. An Indian Cultural has been set up in Colombo.There is a Cultural and Academic Exchange Programme with Bangladesh.

A Nepal-Bharat Sanskritik Kendra Library has been set up in Kathmandu, Nepal which houses a large collection of books and documents on India. Besides India has been donating a large number of books to libraries in Nepal and other countries in South Asia. India will host a special exhibition on Buddhist traditions of Bhutan later this year.

A large number of cultural troops have been exchanged on a bilateral basis with SAARC countries.The first SAARC Film Festival was organised in Sri Lanka in 1999 in which India participated. India also participated in the South Asian Federation Games in 1999 at Kathmandu with a large contingent. Under the SAARC Audio-Visual Exchange (SAVE) Programme, radio and television programmes are regularly exchanged between countries of the SAARC region.